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Ministry of Attorney General
and Minister responsible for Multiculturalism

WELCOMEBC ASSISTS IMMIGRANTS WITH MULTIPLE BARRIERS

VICTORIA – Under WelcomeBC, government has awarded $1.6 million over two years to a consortium of service agencies for a new pilot program for immigrants who need ongoing assistance to adapt to living in B.C., Attorney General and Minister responsible for Multiculturalism Wally Oppal announced today.

"For a variety of reasons, some newcomers face multiple barriers to succeeding economically and socially," said Oppal. "This program will focus on helping immigrants who have endured lengthy stays in refugee camps or are victims of torture or war. It will also assist immigrants from rural areas who are now coping with living in our highly urbanized centres."

During 2002 to 2006, over 10,000 refugees arrived in British Columbia, mostly settling in Vancouver, Burnaby, New Westminster and Surrey. The new program will provide outreach services to isolated clients in those areas who are not using current services for immigrants.

Five mobile, interdisciplinary teams of two staff each will provide services for immigrant families in their own homes. The teams will serve as a resource for information on child care, health, Canadian customs, language-training classes and pre-employment training services. Staff will follow up and work with clients and their families to assist them to settle and adapt to their new surroundings.

The program, called Step Ahead, is unique in that it brings together five service organizations uniting as a consortium under a single business plan. Burnaby Family Life Institute, DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society, Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia, MOSAIC and S.U.C.C.E.S.S. will share expertise and resources, while MOSAIC will be lead agency for the program.

"This integrated service delivery model is a fresh approach to a very real need in the immigrant population," said Eyob Naizghi, executive director of MOSAIC. "We look forward to working together on this program with our respective member agencies to assist these clients with additional needs to achieve self-sufficiency and integration."

The pilot may be extended or expanded into other communities, based on findings of an evaluation.

The $1.6 million funding is for a two-year commitment under WelcomeBC, a provincial initiative announced by Premier Gordon Campbell June 13, 2007. This program is supported by the Government of Canada through the Agreement for Canada-British Columbia Co-operation on Immigration.

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WelcomeBC provides information and services under one umbrella to help immigrants moving to B.C. better adapt to life in their new communities. For more information, visit: www.ag.gov.bc.ca/immigration.

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